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May 1, 1980

EXCISE

Dear Senator Proxmire:

Thank you for your communication of April 14, concerning the operation of Spandau Prison in Berlin, forwarding a letter from [redacted] Wisconsin. We received a similar inquiry from Congressman Zablocki on behalf of [redacted]

B6

The Allied prison in Spandau was established jointly by the Four Powers to oversee the carrying out of the sentences imposed by the International Military Tribunal at Nuernberg. The expenses of maintaining the prison itself are covered by reimbursements from the Berlin Occupation Cost Budget, which is in turn paid for by the taxpayers of the Federal Republic of Germany. These costs are high, and ones we would gladly eliminate by releasing the sole remaining prisoner. While there are US soldiers who provide the external guard for the prison one month out of four, they would be stationed in Berlin anyway in connection with the occupation of the City and their salaries would be paid irrespective of their Spandau guard duties. Those salaries do not represent a cost to the American taxpayer for the operation of the prison.

We insist, however, that the agreements on the prison, like the others on which our position in Berlin rests, may not be changed except by unanimous consent of the Four Powers. As much as we would like to see Rudolf Hess released for humanitarian reasons, we do not wish to provide the Soviets any precedent for unilateral moves of their own against the freedom of the City or its ties to the West. We fear that they might regard it as just such a precedent if we attempted to make a change at Spandau to which they had not consented.

The Honorable
William Proxmire,
United States Senate.

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On the question of the continued imprisonment of Rudolf Hess, we, the British and the French have sought his release on humanitarian grounds for many years. We have not thus far been able to persuade the Soviets to our shared view that Hess' age and the length of time he has been imprisoned should be considered and that he ought to be released to spend his remaining years with his family. Together with the French and the British we will continue to seek Hess' release on humanitarian grounds.

I appreciate your interest in this question, and trust that this information will assist you in replying further to [redacted] B6

Sincerely,

J. Brian Atwood
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.